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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effects of "round robin reading" (RRR) as an instructional procedure in social studies. Specifically, the study asked whether an oral textbook presentation had a significant effect on learning social studies material and if grade level, reading level, social studies knowledge, and gender significantly affected the type of textbook presentation. A total of 166 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students and ten teachers in a small rural-oriented, suburban middle class school participated in the study. Teachers taught in their usual manner and each was assigned randomly to present the material either by RRR, having students take turns reading to the class while other students follow along, or silent reading by students only. Round robin reading appeared to be an ineffective and destructive instructional method, and although silent reading of the text appeared to be generally more effective, controlling for social studies knowledge or reading ability caused teacher reading of the text to appear the most effective mode of textbook presentation. Silent reading may be more effective for good readers while teacher reading may be more effective for weaker students. (SRT)

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AN EVALUATION OF TWO FORMS OF ORAL READING AS A MEANS OF INTERMEDIATE SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

Charles H. Hill

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AN EVALUATION OF TWO FORMS OF ORAL READING AS A
MEANS OF INTERMEDIATE SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

Content area teachers, especially those teaching social studies and textbook-oriented science, have used oral reading as a major instructional technique for many decades. The most dominant form of oral reading has been termed in the literature, "round robin reading."

Round robin reading, for the sake of brevity hereafter referred to as RRR, occurs when students read a textbook aloud while others are expected to listen or perhaps follow. Successive students are chosen to read portions of the text. Sometimes only certain students are chosen but frequently the reading follows the seating order.

Robinson (1955) observed that RRR has been a pattern of instruction in our country for 500 years. Spache (1951) conducted a survey in which he found one-third of American classrooms used RRR daily. In 1982, this author conducted a survey of fifth grade teachers in South Dakota, finding that 96 per cent of the teachers use RRR as a major instructional strategy for teaching social studies and/or science, with an average of 30 minutes per day being used for this activity. This finding is consistent with the writer's observations, and reports by students having field experience, in three Midwestern states.

Within the 1982 South Dakota survey was the revealing phenomenon of the written denial by high administrative officials in two large school districts of the usage of RRR by teachers, hence denial of permission to survey the teachers. In one of the districts, a building principal inadvertently distributed surveys, revealing nearly 100 per cent usage of RRR. Observation in the second district in more than 40 intermediate rooms over four years confirms a similar high rate of usage of RRR. Why would

administrators choose to deny the obvious?

Two problems are apparent. First, there is a total lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of oral reading of any type as a teaching method in the content areas. Several authors have speculated as to why RRR in particular is used. Cecelia Fink (1980) speculated that teachers use RRR because they are not sure how to teach and are reverting to their memory of their own school years. Millward (1977) noted four reasons for the widespread use of RRR in the content areas. He postulated that a) it requires no planning, b) it can be used in any content area regardless of the competency of the teachers, c) it allows firm classroom control and d) it has the credibility of having been modeled during student teaching.

Teacher movtives for using RRR may be a bit more noble. Nearly all teachers using RRR believe that it will aid the recall of material. There is some theoretical arguement to support this contention. Gerber (1983) discusses the "verbalization strategy" of learning disabled children. Hearing material may support visual imput. There are the assumptions, risky at best, that the student is listening, visually tracking, has the conceptual schema for both vocabulary and content, and has both an expectation and strategy for responding to the information, not to mention the motivation to make an effort.

The second problem of which the dishonest administrators may have been aware is that nearly all of the meager literature references to RRR offer rather heated disparagement of the method of instruction. Such words as "vulture," (True, 1979), "dodo bird," (Fink, 1980), and "hawklike," (Artely, 1972) are used in reference to RRR. Most recently, Standal and Townen (1982) have presented the "virtues" of RRR. These virtues include in part: learning to tolerate boredom gracefully, learning to put down other students who stumble, learning how to pretend to be alert, and other negative outcomes.

Oral reading by the teacher is treated more generously in the literature. It is suggested that the teacher should read text material to students as a profitable teaching activity (Briggs, 1978) (Robertson, 1974). Similar advice which also stresses student responsibility to follow and answer questions is given by Laffey (1978) and Fravel (1980).

The present study was undertaken to determine the effects of round robin reading as an instructional procedure in social studies. Specifically, the following questions were asked:

1. Is there a significant effect of oral textbook presentation upon learning social studies material?
2. Are there significant effects of grade level, reading level, social studies knowledge, and gender upon the effectiveness of type of textbook presentation?

METHOD

Subjects

All of the fourth, (N = 64, fifth (N = 42), and sixth (N = 60) grade students in a small rural-oriented, suburban middle class school (Total N = 223) participated in the present study. The non-caucasian N was 9. Students attended four fourth grade rooms, three fifth grade rooms, and three sixth grade rooms. For purposes of data analysis, the California Test Bureau Achievement Test scores, ga thered seven months earlier, were used as the measure of social studies achievement. To classify students" reading achievement, each student was reported by their teacher to be placed in a high, middle, or low (including Chapter I students, special education students) reading group.

All ten intermediate teachers participated in this study. Teachers ranged in experience from 2 years to 24 years with a median of 9.8 years. Four teachers held a Master's degree.

Materials

All procedures were transacted during the second and third week of April. Teachers selected two subsections of a unit normally taught at that time, based upon the Macmillan Social Studies series.

Evaluation

Following each subsection within the Macmillan textbooks is a section entitled To Help You Learn. Participating teachers indicated that these questions were their guides for review, written work, and testing. The researcher, a graduate assistant, and each classroom teacher cooperated in developing a 20-item test for each subsection, using existent questions. Each item was in the form of a one-sentence cloze exercise, the sentences no more than 18 words long, deleted answers no more than 2 words. Sentences were simple, declarative sentences. Fifteen questions were recall of fact, five were judged by all to be of a cognitive level more difficult than simple recall.

In order to eliminate reading disability and visual-motor writing problems as counfounding factors, each subsection test was audio-taped. Students were told by the reader to follow the reader by reading the printed copy of the test before them and to write their answers in the blank spaces. Students were also told that handwriting and spelling would not be considered in the grading. Following instructions, each sentence was read slowly, a 20 second pause was given, the question was reread, followed by a 30 second pause prior to the next question. The same tape and mimeographed worksheet were used for both the pretest and post-test.

Procedure

Teachers were instructed to teach in their usual manner. Each was assigned randomly to present the textbook material by using round robin reading (going up and down rows, each student reading one paragraph), reading the textbook materials to the class while students follow in the

text, and silent reading of the text by students only.

The pretest was given on Monday, during the alloted 30-minute social studies period. On Tuesday, the customary lecture and/or audio-visual aids were presented. Wednesday and Thursday were used to present the textbook by one of the three experimental methods. Fifteen minutes of oral questioning followed coverage of textbook material. On Friday, the post-test was given.

While this method of coverage of social studies topics is not recommended by the writer, it does closely approximate the standard procedures used by the participating school and by most other intermediate grades observed by the writer.

RESULTS

Differences between pretest and posttest scores for each student were calculated. The range of change scores was from -9 to +14. Thirtyfive .5% of change scores indicated a loss, 22.9% showed no change and 41. % displayed a gain of postest scores compared to the pretest score.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA, using the SPSS program) was performed with the independent variables being three reading types; silent reading, round robin reading, and teacher reading. Table one displays the results, indicating a significant effect of reading type on change score ($F=9.749$, $P< .000$).

TABLE 1

Analysis of Variance
Change Score X Reading Type

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. of F
Treatments	2	236.032	131.516	9.749	P<.000
Error	163	2198.982	13.491		
Total	165	2462.014			

N = 223

Further inspection of the data indicated information displayed in Table 2. Clearly, silent reading produced superior results with RRR having negative effects upon the change score. The variation of mean scores attributable to reading type, however, is only approximately 10%.

TABLE 2

Multiple Classification Analysis
Change Score X Reading Type

Grand Mean = .36

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'N	ETA	Beta
Silent Reading	41	1.52		
RRR	71	-1.41		
Teacher Reading	54	.70		
			.33	.33
Multiple R Squared				.107

Another research question concerned the effects of gender upon the effectiveness of each variable. A two-way ANOVA is reported in Table 3. No significant interaction of gender X reading type was found. Gender accounted, however, for 11% of the change score variation.

TABLE 3

Analysis of Variance
Change Score X Reading Type X Gender

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. of F
Main Effects	3	278.396	92,799	6.868	.000
Readtype	2	276.356	138.178	10.227	.000
Gender	1	1.821	1.821	.135	.714
2-Way Interaction Readtype Gender	2	8.110	4.055	.300	.741
Error	158	2134.715	13.511		
Total	163	2421.221	14.854		

Total N = 223

Another potential independant variable in this study was grade level. Table 4 displays the results. While the effects of grade level were highly significant ($P \leq .000$) the interaction between reading type and grade level was not significant.

TABLE 4

Analysis of Variance
Change Score X Read Type X Grade

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. of F
Main Effects	4	993.763	248.441	26.951	.000
Read Type	2	28.650	14.325	1.554	.215
Grade	2	730,731	365,366	39.635	.000
2-Way Interactions					
Readtype X Grade	3	11.764	3.921	.425	.735
Error	158	1456.487	9.218		
Total	165	2462.014	14.921		

Total N = 223

Further analysis of the data revealed in table 5 suggests that silent reading was clearly the most effective when the effect of grade level was controlled, with RRR creating a negative mean gain. While grades 5 and 6 made gains, the 4th graders did more poorly overall, showing a loss in change score.

TABLE 5

Multiple Classification Analysis
Change Score X Readtype X Grade

Grand Mean = .36

Variable & Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'N	ETA	Adjusted for Independents Dev'N	Beta
Readtype					
Silent	41	1,52		.88	
RR	71	-1.41		.11	
Teacher	54	.70		.53	
			.33		.14
Grade					
4	64	-3.04		-3.27	
5	42	1.81		1.52	
6	60	1.98		2.42	
			.63		.68
Multiple R Squared					.404

Previous social studies knowledge as measured by the California Achievement Test was submitted as a covariate in the ANCOVA test reported in table 6, Prior social studies knowledge is shown having a significant ($P < .000$) effect upon the change score. Table 7 displays information which suggest that once again RRR produced negative results. When the data is adjusted for social studies score, the oral reading of the text by the teacher appears to be the most effective of the reading types.

TABLE 6

Analysis of Variance
Change Score X Readtype X SS Score

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. of F
SS Score	1	172.961	172.961	15.102	.000
Reading Type	2	216.203	108.102	9.439	.000
Error	109	1248.367	11.453		
Total	112	1637.532	14.621		

Total N = 223

TABLE 7

Multiple Classification Analysis
Change Score X Readtype X SS Score

Grand Mean = .65

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'N	ETA	Adjusted For Independents + Covariates Dev'N	Beta
Silent Reading	29	1.17		.61	
RRR	53	-1.82		-1.47	
Teacher Read	31	2.02		1.95	
			.46		.39
Multiple R Squared					.238

Placement in three reading groups was also considered as a covariate in an ANCOVA. Table 8 reports that reading placement has a significant ($P < .023$) effect upon change scores. Teacher Reading proved to be the most effective type of textual instruction, with RRR again showin a negative

effect, as shown in table 9.

TABLE 8

Analysis of Variance
Change Score X Read Type X Reading Placement

Scource	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. of F
Reading Level	1	62.586	62.586	5.284	.023
Readtype	2	283.899	141.958	11.984	.000
Error	189	1291.046	11.844		
Total	112	1637.532	14.621		

Total N = 223

TABLE 9

Multiple Classification Analysis
Change Score X Readtype X Reading Group

Grand Mean = .65

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'N	ETA	Adjusted For Independents + Covariates Dev'N	Beta
Silent Reading	29	1.17		1.05	
RRR	53	-1.82		-1.75	
Teacher Read	31	2.02		2.01	
			.46		.44
Multiple R Squared					.212

In order to verify the accuracy of reading group placement, a Pearson Correlation Coefficients, with reading placement and reading score on the California Achievement test being compared. The results of r = - .5725, P < .000).

During the two weeks following the present study, this design was replicated, using tests and materials covering the succeeding chapter in the textbooks. Each teacher was assigned a different reading type.

The results of this second paradigm are not reported herein. The data and statistical results were essentially parallel to the findings reported. The grand mean of the variance tended to be lower in each Multiple Classification Analysis, with RRR obtaining more strongly negative variations from the mean. The ANOVA and ANCOVA findings of significance were similar.

CONCLUSIONS

With the population reported in the present study, the following findings seem to be indicated.

1. The restricted range and high percentage of negative pretest - posttest change scores reflects a generally ineffective model for teaching social studies. A number of factors in the "traditional" approach into which this study was imbedded may be questioned. The limited amount of time devoted to social studies, heavy dependence upon the textbook as the primary instructional vehicle, and evaluation exclusively by textbook tests may all have contributed to the meager results. Nevertheless, this instructional pattern is the dominant mode in classrooms observed by the author. Fourth graders generally performed very poorly, creating a diluting of the overall results.

2. Round robin reading as a means of accessing the textbook appears to produce negative results. Even when the effects of grade level, gender, social studies knowledge, and reading ability were seperately controlled, RRR was shown to be a destructive methodology .

3. The variables of social studies knowledge and reading ability appear to influence the effectiveness of the three types of textbook presentation which were studied. While silent reading of the text appeared to be generally more effective, controlling for social studies knowledge or reading ability caused teacher reading of the text to appear to be the most effective mode of textbook presentation.

One explaination for these effects may be that the fourth graders may have not had sufficient listening skills to attend to the teacher reading the text.

A comparison of the results of instruction with specific social studies knowledge levels and reading levels was beyond the scope of this

study. While we know that these variables affect the outcome of instruction, we cannot describe the relationship. Neither was it within the scope of this analysis to describe which reading type was most effective for each of the grade levels studied.

Discussion

This study appears to support the contention that round robin reading is both ineffective and destructive as an instructional method.

The ability to generalize these results beyond the immediate population studied is limited by several factors, including: a generally questionable approach to teaching social studies and the caucasian, rural nature of the population.

Many questions remain unanswered. Further research is needed to establish the precise nature of the relationship between the modes of textbook presentation and the variables of grade level, reading ability, and social studies knowledge. It is suspected by this author that the use of a textbook as the primary instructional tool, under any mode of presentation, is inappropriate for children below grade five. Silent reading may be more effecient and effective for good readers while teacher reading may be more effective for weaker students. Future research should investigate and document this questions.

At a minimum, teachers of intermediate grade social studies should be aware that their mode of presentation of textbook material will have differential effects. Teachers must be intuitively sensitive to the effects of their methodology and attempt to provide multiple means of accessing the textbook material. Wood (1983) offers, for instance, several ways in which oral reading can be creatively used in instruction. Of all alternative strategies, round robin reading as defined herein should be regarded as highly questionable.

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